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INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1866
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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8937
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6513
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4342
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2331
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000189

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: MLS DIRECTOR MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: RANGOON 175

Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Summary

1. (C) EAP/MLS Director Stephen Blake visited Burma March 22-25, as part of his five-country familiarization tour. In Nay Pyi Taw March 24, Blake, Charge, and Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win discussed a range of issues. Mr. Blake and Charge expressed strong concern over the recent curtailment of the Tripartite Core Group's (TCG) powers and urged the regime to immediately release all of Burma's political prisoners as part of any transition to democracy. The Foreign Minister acknowledged that the TCG has worked well and noted the GOB's intention to extend it through 2010, but did not address the recent curtailment of visa-issuing powers. Nyan Win asserted that the 2010 elections will be up to international standards. He described USG concerns over political prisoners as the product of a "different perspective." The Foreign Minister told us the GOB would welcome a visit by UNSYG Ban, though there are concerns about timing and high international expectations. Visits by U.S. Senators would also be welcome. End summary.

USG Policy Review: A Two Way Street

2. (C) Charge briefed the Foreign Minister on his recent consultations in the U.S., noting significant, ongoing USG interest in Burma. Both Mr. Blake and Charge explained that the Obama administration is reviewing the USG's Burma policy with an eye to achieving greater progress towards genuine democracy and respect for human rights. Nyan Win declared it is Burma's policy to regard all nations as friends. He will do his best to promote relations with the U.S. The Charge noted that if the GOB significantly improves its approach on human rights and democracy issues, improved relations will follow.

TCG: If It Aint Broke, Don't Fix It

3. (C) Mr. Blake relayed continued USG interest in providing direct assistance to Cyclone Nargis victims and

noted that the USG has contributed nearly 75 million thus far. In that regard, the TCG has been a successful example of cooperation between the GOB and international community to meet a pressing humanitarian need. However, the recent curtailment of the Tripartite Core Group's (TCG) visa-granting powers and new restrictions on the activities of NGOs (reftel) have raised concerns in Washington. Charge added that the unfortunate TCG changes come at a critical time given our ongoing policy review. He urged Nyan Win to press senior generals to turn around the recent policy changes. The Foreign Minister acknowledged that the TCG has worked well and mentioned the GOB's willingness at the recent ASEAN Summit to extend the mechanism through 2010. He claimed ignorance of recent changes, since the TCG Chair, U Kyaw Thu, is no longer a Deputy Foreign Minister. Nyan Win did note that extending the TCG's duration was with an understanding that donor assistance would continue to flow, and pledges for the next year are reportedly only at the 60% mark.

Open Door for UN Visits - Timing issue

14. (C) Nyan Win said the GOB "has always allowed" visits by UN envoy Gambari, though timing has sometimes had to be worked out. The Foreign Minister noted recent visits to Burma by Gambari, Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Ojea-Quintana, UNHCR Guterres, and ILO Executive Director Tapiola. Nyan Win said "a cornerstone" of Burma's foreign policy is cooperation with international organizations

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including the UN. He said it is the intent of the SYG to visit soon, and Burma would welcome that; but there are "high level expectations for a tangible result" from the international community. The cabinet is seeking the best timing for both sides. The schedule of the head of state must be taken into deliberation, too.

U.S. and Burmese Visits

15. (C) Nyan Win expressed hope that possible high-level USG visits, including perhaps by Senators Kerry and Webb, could help improve U.S.-Burmese relations. Nyan Win said the GOB is prepared to continue to issue visas to USG visitors, subject to "appropriate reviews." He had begun the meeting by expressing deep disappointment that his own request to visit the Burmese Embassy in Washington DC on the margins of last year's UN General Assembly was denied. He urged the USG to reconsider next autumn.

Elections and Democracy

16. (C) When asked, the Foreign Minister reiterated his statement at last year's UNGA that the 2010 elections will be "free and fair," adding that Burma has "experience with free elections in the past" and would replicate that example with elections "that meet international standards." While some may choose not to participate, anyone "who is not otherwise restricted according to law" (he noted that Burmese law forbids monks from voting) will be allowed to participate, regardless of political affiliation. Nyan Win said the intent is to "try to satisfy the majority of the people." Mr. Blake reiterated U.S. interest in the elections and made the point that surely all political prisoners would need to be able to participate freely if the international community is to consider an election free and fair. Nyan Win responded that people have different perspectives. The Burmese Government believes the majority want a "peaceful and democratic state." He urged the USG to consider Burma's "positive sides," too. Nyan Win added that legal experts currently are working on the election law which he said will be "promulgated in the near future."

Comment

¶7. (C) Nyan Win, and his GOB colleagues, clearly are interested in improved U.S.-Burma relations. Unfortunately, it is not at all clear the senior generals are prepared to take concrete steps toward political freedom that would facilitate such improvement.

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